

NEWS RELEASE

Date: September 11, 2014
Contact: Court Executive Office
Phone: 530-406-6838
Woodland, CA 95695

The Yolo Superior Court announced the unanimous election of new presiding and assistant presiding judges for 2015-2016: Judge Kathleen M. White will be the next Presiding Judge, succeeding Judge Steven M. Basha. Judge Janet Gaard will be the new Assistant Presiding Judge. The Presiding Judge, with the assistance of the Court Executive Officer, is responsible for leading the court, establishing policies, and allocating resources in a manner that promotes access to justice for all members of the public. In the absence of the Presiding Judge, the Assistant Presiding Judge assumes the responsibilities. The terms for Judges White and Gaard will begin on January 1, 2015 and end on December 31, 2016.

Judge White was appointed to the Yolo Superior Court bench in April 2003 to fill a newly created position. She now presides over a family court department, and has previously handled felony, misdemeanor, drug court, civil/probate and juvenile dependency and delinquency assignments. Prior to her judicial appointment, Judge White spent 6 years working for the court as general counsel and then CEO. Before joining the court, Judge White practiced business litigation with the multinational firm of White & Case in its Los Angeles office, and thereafter, specialized litigation as founding partner in the Pasadena law firm of Tron & White. She is an honors graduate of Duke University and of the University of Southern California, Gould School of Law, where she served as an editor of the law review.

Judge White has often served the judicial system in a statewide capacity. Among her appointments are the Presiding Judges/Court Executive Officer Rules working group, in which she assisted in the consideration and drafting of new statewide court rules, the Collaborative Justice Courts Advisory Committee, and the Rural Judges Education Committee. She has taught at Cow County Judges Association Meetings, the California Association of Court Investigators Conference, and the CSUS Center for California Studies. Locally, she serves on the Courthouse Construction committee and the New Courthouse Design committee. She is the author of numerous articles on trial practice and procedure and court administration.

Judge Gaard was appointed in 2008 to succeed Judge Doris Shockley. Prior to her appointment to the bench, she had a distinguished career with the California Attorney General's Office, serving as Chief Assistant Attorney General for the Division of Public Rights; Special Assistant Attorney General and Director of Legislative Affairs for the California Department of Justice; and Deputy Attorney in the Division of Criminal Law. Early in her career she was an attorney for the Third District Court of Appeal. Judge Gaard has presided over felony, misdemeanor, drug court, civil/probate and general trial assignments, and she pioneered Yolo County's mental health court. She currently presides over a family law calendar and mental health court. Judge Gaard also teaches at the California Judicial College for new judges and is a member of the Criminal Law Advisory Committee to the California Judicial Council. She received her J. D. from the University of California, Davis School of Law and a bachelor's degree from California State University, Fresno.

Judge White commented: "It's an honor to be asked to serve. The Yolo court has an exceptionally talented and dedicated group of judges and staff, committed to improving access to justice and serving the public even in these times of fiscal austerity. We look forward to the mid-2015 completion of the new courthouse by the state, and the improved services to the entire community that the new building will bring."

She added “I am also very pleased that Judge Gaard will serve as Asst. Presiding Judge. Her long tenure in State Government gives her a statewide perspective on important issues, and her collaborative skills and insight are invaluable as we move forward.”